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ABSTRACT

The effects of returning to the classroom on the self-perception of women who had been away for some time and on the perceptions of their families were studied. A self-report survey was completed by three groups of women in different educational settings: 9 graduates of a general educational development high school diploma program; 11 graduates of an applied science degree at a community college; and 11 students in a master of education program at a university. Self-esteem, spousal perception, childrens' perception, and estimation of marketable skills were assessed on a pre-return, post-return attitudinal scale. It was found that returning to school precipitated changes in the woman's self-perception and in her family member's perceptions of her. Gain in self-esteem was the highest overall change. Each of the three groups rated an increase in estimation of marketable skills following return to school. The majority of respondents also felt that their return to the classroom had a significant impact on their lives. A literature review, a bibliography, and a questionnaire are included. (Author/SW)

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Attitudinal and Social Changes in Re-emerging Academic Women

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Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine whether to return to school by the woman who had been away for some time would effect changes and improvements in her self-perception and in the perceptions of those with whom she shares close relationships. A researcher-developed self-report survey was given to three groups of women in different educational settings: a) nine graduates of a GED high school diploma program; b) eleven graduates of an Applied Science degree at a community college; and c) eleven students in a Master of Education program at a university. Self-esteem, spousal perception, children's perception, and estimation of marketable skills were assessed on a pre-return / post-return scale. Results indicated that significant changes and improvements in personal attitudes and in interpersonal relationships occurred following return.

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Introduction

Background

In the United States, women are re-emerging into academic environments, and consequently into the labor market, in astounding multitudes. The number of women returning to colleges and universities has shown a dramatic upward spiral in the last twenty years. The Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor noted in 1980 that women accounted for nearly three-fifths of the increase in the civilian labor force in the past decade.

There have been multiple reasons cited for women's return to the educational setting after some time away. Mendelsohn (1980) reported that the most stated reason was to prepare for employment; followed closely by the need to fulfill a desire for education or achievement. Facilitation of personal growth and stimulation were mentioned less frequently. The majority of re-emerging women felt that being a student was a very significant part of their life.

Certain characteristics have been attributed to women re-emerging into academia. Assessments given by career and guidance counselors (Barlow-Burgess & Kaufman, 1983; Sackett, 1983; Reed, 1983) indicated that these returning women generally: possessed low self-esteem; were frustrated at unmet needs; held fear of familial response to their return; maintained minimal skills development; and evidenced lack of appreciation or awareness of present skills.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine effects of returning to the

classroom on these women in the areas of: self-esteem; spousal perception of them; children's perception of them; and possession of marketable skills. The author desired to ascertain whether a discrepancy existed between the counselors' descriptions of the re-emerging women and the women's self-perceptions of their lives and relationships.

Significance of the Problem

Sheer numbers make the phenomena of women returning to the campus worthy of note. The return to academia, which ultimately leads in many instances to the marketplace, has altered the fabric of United States society and has touched all stratas of socioeconomic realms. Implications reach into homes, interpersonal relationships, child rearing, and indeed, into the academic institutions of every state.

Investments of women returning to education have made their mark upon the nation's economy--not only in the millions of dollars spent on learning for these women; but also in the influx of the newly educated woman into the professional and nonprofessional workplaces.

Re-emerging women have forced changes in the traditional views and methods of child care and child rearing. Social and occupational sex roles have been radically influenced by women entering areas of acedemia and the marketplace that were previously closed to them--in many instances--due to their lack of education.

Hypothesis

In view of the foregoing information, it was hypothesized that a return to

school for the woman who had been away for some time would lead to significant changes and improvements in her self-perception and in perceptions of those with whom she shared interpersonal relationships.

Definitions of Terms

Re-emerging Women-- Women, who after having spent some time away from the academic environment, return to the classroom. These women may be from all socioeconomic groupings and may possess varying levels of educational or occupational achievement.

Assumptions and Limitations

In this study, it was assumed that the responses from the self-report surveys were answered truthfully by the participants. It was also assumed that those participants polled were representative of the remaining population of re-emerging women. The research was limited to small groups of three areas of the academic environment.

Review of Literature

Two decades ago, Muller and Muller (1960) speculated that the role of the educated woman would be a provocative topic of the future. They acknowledged that even then, the life-pattern of American women had been altered to a way quite different from that of their grandmothers' day. Challenges were foreseen; but their assessment was that the coming changes would be for the better.

The predictions of researchers in the past have become reality. Women re-

emerging into the workplace and the academic environments have led employers and educational institutions to re-examine their roles in the lives of thousands of re-entry women.

As previously mentioned, most returning women in academia cited preparation for employment as the central reason for turning to the classroom. Seaton (1982) studied the impact of changing sex roles on higher education of women in the United States. Findings show that the most dramatic developments have occured since 1960. Women continue to include employment as an integral part of their lives, and most hope to become more flexible in their attitudes and behaviors regarding the way sex roles are played. Higher education for women has been responsive, according to Seaton, by becoming more career oriented and by embracing women of all ages. Many institutions throughout the country have initiated programs which attempt to address specific needs of returning women.

The University of Georgia's Women's Opportunities Network functions as an advocate for adult women students, maintains a research program on such students, and promotes the development of services, activities, and programs for them (Holt, 1982).

The Women's Educational Study Commission of Midway College (1982) examined the issue of educating women for a full future. Three components were deemed as necessary parts of the college education for women: Marketable skills; critical thinking capacity development; and establishing a realistic, positive self-image.

Other institutions focus on the needs of the "displaced homemaker." St. Louis Community College established a vocational counseling program designed

to help displaced homemakers enter the job market for the first time or after a significant absence. Career interest testing, workshops on confidence building, and referrals to placement areas are incorporated into the program. Support groups supply reinforcement and encouragement on reentry. Classes center on assertiveness training and dealing with anxiety as well as developing positive self-images and coping skills (Hanks, 1982).

While on-campus reentry student services are seen as needed to help students in the process of returning to academic environments, Koplewitz (1982) went beyond that in her study of the need for and the development and implications of a feminist-oriented philosophy of education. She used a participatory, communal, and interactive method in attempting to address some of the problems and issues, methods and values in a feminist-oriented philosophy in terms of life experiences of ten adult learners. Koplewitz defined feminist-oriented philosophy of education as that which would challenge the political, economic, social, and cultural areas of society which perpetuates the male dominated status quo. Her study particularly emphasized the importance of adult women learners of establishing educational goals that would maximize and liberate their educational opportunities and experiences.

Since employment holds a dominant position in the aspirations of re-emerging women, McLaren (1982) looked at the ambitions of 48 working-class women in adult education courses. Internal and external control was studied in conjunction with related theories concerning vocabularies of motive and causal attributions. The results indicate that to obtain an accurate account of the ambitions and aspirations of these women, one must: a) examine their feelings of

powerlessness, alienation, oppression, and self-blame; b) examine the collective organization around a shared awareness of system-blame; and c) support the active seeking of alternative social institutions.

Another researcher (Ferguson, 1982) studied 27 "successful" women in order to determine changes in style for successful professional women over time. It was shown that younger successful women identify more with feminine behavior, attributing success to being female and to feminine affiliative skills typically learned as part of their natural socialization process. Younger women do not choose between career and family--rather they mate and marry, crediting part of their success to supportive mates.

Older women in Ferguson's study differ and describe their keys to success as adopting masculine dress and behavior as well as developing technical skills and competence. Most felt that they had to choose between career and family and had little support from their mates.

The study concludes that women's success, based on feminine skills, has a reciprocal impact on standards of the work place to include more balanced perspectives.

The role of feminine identity and affiliation was studied in women who were oriented toward male dominated courses of study. Plas and Wallston (1983) explored the relationships between network variables and levels of self-valuing in 43 women students with interest in science careers. The women self-reported information concerning self-esteem, attitudes toward encouragement and valuing of men and women, and the perceived level of emotional support received from both sexes.

The results showed that female-oriented variables were able to account for 68 percent of the variance associated with valuing of self; whereas male-oriented predictors accounted for substantially smaller portions. The researchers assumed that the development and maintenance of self-esteem may be related importantly to the reference groups employed. The women in the study who evidenced higher levels of self-esteem reported greater valuing and encouragement of other women and saw more women to be important to their interpersonal worlds.

Identity, then, seems to be a major factor in the adjustments of both groups--working women and returning women students. In a measurement for identity status in 88 women students, questions were asked regarding occupational goals, religious and political ideologies, and sexual values. The results support the notion that achievement of identity enhances self-esteem in women and that non-traditional areas of identity development are becoming more important determinants of adjustment (Prager, 1982).

Women re-emerging into different mid-life patterns prove to be stimulating subjects for researchers as evidenced by the volumes written about them. Yet, findings hold valuable information with potential implications for generations of women to come. Planning for life's stages and phases presents new dimensions in determining one's lifestyle. So called, "middle-age", takes on innuendos of excitement, achievement, and fulfillment.

Singer (1982) studied the details of the lived experiences of the adult years for women who chose to follow the reentry pattern for mid-life. Most women, at some point around 40 years of age, entered the job market or the edu-

cational arena with some career focus in mind. Each of these women changed their life orientations from a home-centered focus to a career or integrated focus.

Themes emerged, according to the researcher, which demonstrated a life structure that stresses individuation within the context of personal, relational, and professional competence. For these women, consideration and movement toward an increase in self-focus seemed feasible only after they experienced a stabilization and predictability in their families. Three major phases of life were identified as self-identity, marriage and family, and reentry pattern.

The lives of educated women in their thirties were explored by Cokin (1982). In-depth, retrospective interviews were used to assess ten women between the ages of 38 and 44. Most saw the decade of their thirties as a time of transition. It was seen as a time of exploration, growth, and change. Individuation within the context of their relationships to other; the physical self; changing relationships with parents, spouses and children; the integration of work into the life structure; and a first awareness of time being limited were discussed as important processes of midlife.

The impact of employment status on self-esteem, psychological well-being, and physical health of middle-aged women was examined in a study involving 389 women between the ages of 40 and 59 (Coleman and Antonucci, 1983). Results showed that working women had higher self-esteem and less psychological anxiety than their homemaker counterparts. In addition, employed women reported better physical health. The researchers concluded that work may be seen as a stabilizing force for women during critical periods of their life cycle.

Spousal and familial responses to their return to the job market or to the campus remain as important considerations for the re-emerging women. Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) investigated the conflicts resulting from the integration of home and non-home roles of returning women. They studied 115 couples with intact marriages and at least one child. It was found that the time demands of the student role more strongly conflicted for women whose husbands held relatively traditional sex role attitudes than for women whose husbands were more non-traditional.

Sixty-nine percent of the women reported at least one conflict. Women who held non-traditional attitudes experienced more conflicts than traditional women but reacted more constructively than the traditional women to conflict.

Time constraints create pressures in the marital relationship that are difficult to resolve. The most common complaint by far that men bring up when their wives return to school is that they see much less of them. There is usually a dramatic change of routine at home, and peaceful time together is one thing that can easily be obliterated from a busy schedule. Although many women decide that their family will come first, no matter what, others have found that what comes first is the most pressing at the moment (Mendelsohn, 1980).

For many women, the campus will eventually give way to the marketplace. If female students are in a state of transition, then it follows that those who leave the classroom for the work setting will carry with them their changed and changing behaviors and attitudes toward work, partnership, and the family.

In a descriptive research project, 260 women were studied by Aswell (1982) to determine the affects of women in the work force on partnerships and family

structures. Two major groups evolved--less non-traditional (40%) and more on-traditional (60%).

Women who were older, had more education, made more money, and thought of their work as a "career" rather than a "job", tended to be in the more non-traditional group. Significant differences among the two groups were found in attitudes and behaviors towards work, partnerships, and family. The less non-traditional women appeared more likely to rely on their partnerships and family for fulfillment.

The majority, however, felt that work made them "equal" partners in their relationships. They saw their children as more independent, self-assured, and capable of handling a variety of experiences as a consequence of their mothers' working. Generally, the women were committed to their lifestyle of work, marriage and family.

Exposure to the academic environment after being away for some time holds the possibility of a dilemma for many women. Lutter (1982) examined the impact of continuing education on women's lives. Through use of personal in-depth interviews and a questionnaire, she studied women between 37 and 45 years of age who held bachelors degrees and were returning to school for exploration of new career and/or degree possibilities.

It was found that there was a great deal of dissonance between the women's old expectations and new desires. Frustrations usually arose from the women's habits of rarely placing personal desires first. The return to school was an opening wedge for many other changes.

The researcher concluded that this group of women need special support

because of being torn between what they "should do and be" and what they "could do and be." These dilemmas can cause family and personal disruption and distress. Almost all the women said that they wanted to be employed and that they were using classes and counseling to define and reach their goals.

Achievement of goals and feminine affiliation have been highlighted in a number of reports on returning women. A study comparing the achievement and affiliation needs of 20 unmarried female university students (18-22 years); 20 married women students (40-55 years); and 20 full time homemakers (40-55 years) was made by Erdwins, Tyer, and Mellinger (1982).

They found that older subjects expressed greater achievement motivation than did the younger subjects. Homemakers' needs for achievment were characterized by conformity and cooperation while older students expressed the need for greater independence and self-reliance. The older students had higher grade point averages than the younger students. Affiliation needs were greatest in the homemaker group.

Perceived changes in personal and family relationships are not the only ones facing the returning woman. Perhaps the greatest challenge lies in the acceptance of the perceived changes in the self. Anna Mae Walsh Burke (1980) stated that the impact of cultural concepts on our own self-perception is tremendous. Burke expressed the opinion that many of the emotional stresses faced by women are the result of their not being able to separate the two words--"woman" and "mother." She admonishes that the woman returning to school must separate her concepts of the role of woman and the role of mother and wife. For many women, this is easier said than done. The difficulty increased for those women who

have equated the role of mother and wife with "self."

In 1970, Elizabeth Douvan provided the challenge that if educators are seriously interested in changing the status of women in the world by enlarging their options, supporting their efforts to use their talents fruitfully and to achieve the fullest possible self-expression and self-realizaiton, they must look closely at where women have come from and where women currently are. Douvan stated that there is a need to assess the social restrictions that limit women's opportunities as well as a need to observe the state of readiness of women themselves to move into areas of potential opportunity. Finally, Douvan concluded, barriers that prevent women from realizing their capacities fully are only partly external.

Douvan's intimation that women may hinder their own achievement has been supported by other researchers. Horner (1970) stated that regardless of how many legal and educational barriers to achievement in women we remove, unless ways are found to prevent learned helplessness and achievement from being aroused in women, our society will continue to suffer a great loss in both human and economic resources.

Dowling (1981) puts it more bluntly:

> Women over thirty in particular are caught in the middle. We've been groomed and educated for dependency--for motherhood, for wifedom; for what is really, when we sit down and analyze it, an infinitely extended childhood. When marriages break up, women are often profoundly shocked to

> find themselves in charge of their lives for the first time. Deep down they had always believed that to be supported and taken care of by someone else was their God-given right. (p. 92)

Women's learned helplessness was studied by Mark (1983) in terms of success in educational settings. Mark hypothesized that learned helplessness has been seen traditionally as a behavioral trait independent of contextual conditions. It has been studied exclusively in achievement settings using achievement tasks and has been perceived as maladaptive behavior requiring intervention or retraining. Mark reasoned that it has not been seen as an adaptive response to situational demands.

The author concluded that researchers of learned helplessness and achievement motivation need to attend to the social context and environmental demands made on students at all educational stages. She holds that schools must attend to the processes inherent in them that perpetuate destructive and self-defeating student behaviors.

Mark received support for her premise in part from Lasky (1983) who stated that self-esteem and achievement are clearly and unequivocally related. Lasky continued that the traditional female role is devalued in United States society and thus women have learned not to value themselves and therefore, have low self-esteem. Poor self-esteem leads to lower aspirations and to lesser achievements, thus reinforcing women's lower self-image.

Lasky states that in our everyday summation of a person's achievement, we

usually mean the power, money, status, or prestige in their professional, business, or political work. Household achievement, being a great cook, giving birth, raising children, and personal efficiency are usually not included in categories of achievement.

College women, Lasky suggests, with high self-esteem are significantly more likely to be motivated to achieve and to have higher aspirations and desire for power. Potential conflicts exist, however, when a person of low self-esteem sets out to do something and does it successfully. An unconcious emotional conflict may occur because feeling of competence and self-derogatory feelings are incompatible. Some compromise must then be made between these two feelings.

The returning woman, then, has chosen to redirect her life. She is no longer stalling or postponing a career decision; but rather has decided to pursue a vocational goal. She is committed to education for both personal development and vocational attainment. The re-emerging woman must be accepted as an individual who is trying to resolve a developmental crisis (Tittle and Denker, 1980).

Method

Population

Women who have returned to the academic environment, after some time away, comprise the population for this study. Similarities are otherwise restricted due to the fact that the population encompasses women of widely varying age, grade, ability, and socioeconomic levels.

Design

This descriptive study was designed to involve three sub-groups of the population. Existing groups, chosen from various areas of academia were used. There were no control groups, nor was a pretest administered.

Subjects

In an effort to present a cross-section of the population, subjects were chosen from three existing groups of women. Each group was selected from a different educational setting. Those who voluntarily participated were:

Nine recent graduates of a 15 week Adult Basic Education course which leads to receipt of a General Educational Development (GED) high school diploma. Age range was 18-56 years.

Eleven graduates of a two year interior design program which led to an Associate of Applied Science degree at Anchorage Community College (ACC). Range in years was 25-40.

Eleven students in a Master of Education program at the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA). Areas of concentration were elementary, secondary, and adult education; guidance and counseling and school administration. Ages ranged from 25-48.

The groups were ethnically mixed with caucasion, black, oriental, and latin cultures represented. Caucasians, however, were predominant in each group. Marital status, ability level, and socioeconomic position varied widely within each group.

Instrument

The instrument employed was a researcher-developed survey of twenty items. Based on the Likert scale model, items were designed to measure attitudinal and social assessments and changes in re-emerging women. A copy of the instrument is included in the appendix of this report.

Participants were asked to assess "pre-return" and "post-return" attitudes and/or changes in the areas of self-esteem, spousal perceptions, children's perceptions, and estimation of marketable skills. Descriptive adjectives indicating minimal to highly significant appraisals were rated on a five point scale. Participants were to circle the one best answer of each item.

Other items explored the subjects' evaluation of feelings regarding return, instructor and peer support, expectations for employment or further education, and the influence of return on lifestyle.

Survey items were constructed with intent to reveal the effects, if any, school had on the self-perception and the interpersonal relationships of the returning woman. The instrument also provided opportunity for participants' comments.

Procedures

The GED group originally consisted of 15 students who were mailed the survey instrument at their homes. A return addressed, stamped envelope accompanied the instrument. Nine of the surveys were returned.

the ACC group was given the survey forms during a class break of approximately 20 minutes. The researcher was not present with the group at any time.

The instrument was made available to the group by a peer member of the class. Forms were placed on a table near the door of the room with a large envelope provided for completed surveys. Although prior permission had been obtained from the class instructor for administration of the survey, the instructor made no comments regarding the instrument to the students. Of the 13 women in the class, 11 completed the forms and returned them to the envelope.

Similarly, the UAA group was provided the instrument during a 15 minute class break. At this time, however, the researcher was present; but made no comments before or during the survey completion. The surveys were made available on a table with an accompanying envelope. The instructor of the class made mention of the instrument to the class and suggested participation. Out of a possible 11 respondents, 11 instruments were completed and returned to the envelope.

Results of all surveys were assembled by one researcher; thereby eliminating possibility for fluctuation in compilation method. Scores for items with dual answers were determined by tossing a coin (heads representing higher value).

"Not applicable" items and items which received no response were not included in the means computation.

Results

Computation of means representing pre-return and post-return data on four major variables show significant increases in each area. Table 1 (page 20) indicates means and gains in variables of Self-esteem, Spousal Perception, Children's Perception, and Estimation of Marketable Skills. Overall, Self-esteem reveals the highest gain followed closely by Estimation of Marketable Skills.

A *t* test for non-independent samples compared the pre-return with post-return assessments of all subjects in each of the four major variables: Self-esteem *t* (df 30)=5.65, $p<.01$; Spousal Perception *t* (df 27)=4.50, $p<.01$; Children's Perception *t* (df 23)=3.22, $p<.01$; and Estimation of Marketable Skills *t* (df 30)=5.39, $p<.01$. In each area, a significant difference was found between the pre-return and post-return data. Therefore, the research hypothesis that "a return to school for the woman who had been away for some time would lead to significant changes and improvements in her self-perception and in the perceptions of those with whom we shared interpersonal relationships" was supported.

In order to determine whether a significant difference existed among groups in their pre-return/post-return responses on the variables, a simple analysis of variance was employed: Self-esteem $F(2,28)=1.03$, $p>.05$; Spousal Perception $F(2,25)=.78$, $p>.05$; Children's Perception $F(2,4)=2.32$, $p>.05$; and Estimation of Marketable Skills $F(2,28)=.69$, $p>.05$. No significant difference was evidenced between the groups, thereby substantiating original findings.

Table 2 (page 22) shows the group means of other variables. Item 11 could

not be included in the means computation because responses did not yield to comparison with other data. The item asked subjects to indicate which of the following most influenced their return to school: necessity, parent/family, spouse/partner, friends, personal desire. Most participants (87%) stated that personal desire was the most influential. Two subjects (7%) credited their spouses as influencing factors. Other areas mentioned were necessity (3%) and friends (3%).

The frequency of responses for individual items as differentiated by groups is reported in Table 3 (pages 22.1-3). Item 11 does not show a weighted average due to the construction of the item. The large concentration of responses on choice 5 clearly indicates personal desire as the most cited factor influencing return to school. The UAA group showed unanimous agreement on choice 5 with the ACC group having only one alternate choice.

TABLE 1

Summary of Means

Pre-return / Post-return Data

Items	GED Pre	GED Post	GED Gain	ACC Pre	ACC Post	ACC Gain	UAA Pre	UAA Post	UAA Gain	TOTAL Pre	TOTAL Post	TOTAL Gain
1. & 2. Level of Self-esteem	2.89	4.44	1.56	3.36	4.18	0.82	3.27	4.36	1.09	3.19	4.32	1.13
4. & 5. Spousal Perception	3.22	3.78	0.56	3.56	3.89	0.33	2.90	3.60	0.70	3.21	3.75	0.54
8. & 9. Children's Perception	3.71	4.29	0.57	4.14	4.29	0.14	4.00	4.33	0.33	3.95	4.30	0.35
16. & 17. Estimation of Marketable Skills	3.11	4.11	1.00	3.64	4.73	1.09	3.36	4.00	0.64	3.39	4.29	0.90

TABLE 2

Group Means of All Other Items

Items	GED	ACC	UAA	TOTAL
3. Return effected change in self-esteem	4.13	3.38	3.91	3.81
6. Return effected change in spousal perception	3.38	3.33	3.00	3.25
7. Return changed marital relations	2.88	2.78	3.18	2.96
10. Return effected change in children's perception	3.00	2.80	2.71	2.83
11.[a] Factors influencing return	----	----	----	----
12. Feelings on first day of return	2.89	3.45	3.36	3.26
13. Ratings of instructors	4.56	3.18	3.55	3.71
14. Ratings of classmates	4.11	3.82	4.09	4.00
15. Attitudes of spouse & children during school	4.56	3.91	3.60	4.00
18. Return raised expectations for a better position	4.00	3.91	4.18	4.03
19. Desire to further education	3.67	4.00	4.18	3.97
20. Return changed life	3.88	3.91	3.91	3.90

[a]See narrative for discussion of Item 11.

TABLE 3

Summary of Responses for Individual Items

Differentiated by Groups

Items	GED								ACC								UAA							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG	0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG	0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG
1. Level of self-esteem prior to return	0	3	0	2	3	1	0	2.89	0	1	2	2	4	2	0	3.36	0	0	3	3	4	1	0	3.27
2. Current level of self-esteem	0	0	0	1	3	5	0	4.44	0	0	0	1	7	3	0	4.18	0	0	0	2	3	6	0	4.36
3. Return effected change in self-esteem	1	0	0	1	5	2	0	3.67	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	3.00	0	0	1	3	3	4	0	3.82
4. Spousal perception prior to return	0	0	1	5	3	0	0	3.22	0	0	0	6	1	3	1	3.70	0	2	0	6	3	0	0	2.91
5. Spousal current perception	0	0	0	2	7	0	0	3.78	1	0	0	3	5	1	1	3.40	1	0	2	1	6	1	0	3.27
6. Return effected change in spousal perception	1	1	1	2	2	2	0	3.00	1	1	1	1	6	0	1	3.00	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2.33
7. Return changed marital relationship	1	0	5	0	2	1	0	2.56	0	1	3	2	3	0	2	2.78	0	0	2	6	2	1	0	3.18
8. Children's perception prior to return	2	0	0	4	1	2	0	2.89	4	0	0	2	2	3	0	2.64	4	0	0	3	2	2	0	2.45

NOTE. NR (No Response) not included in calculation of weighted average.

22.1

TABLE 3(continued)

Items	GED								ACC								UAA							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG	0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG	0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG
9. Children's current perception	2	0	0	1	3	3	0	3.33	4	0	0	1	3	3	0	2.73	5	0	1	1	1	3	0	2.18
10. Return effected change in children's perception	3	2	0	0	3	1	0	2.11	4	0	2	2	1	0	2	1.56	4	2	1	2	1	1	0	1.91
11.[a] Factors influencing return	0	0	0	2	1	6	0	---	0	1	0	0	0	10	0	---	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	---
12. Feelings on first day of return	0	0	4	3	1	1	0	2.89	0	0	1	5	4	1	0	3.45	0	1	3	2	1	4	0	3.36
13. Rating of instructors	0	0	0	2	0	7	0	4.56	0	0	1	5	5	0	0	3.36	0	0	3	2	3	3	0	3.55
14. Rating of class-mates	0	0	0	4	0	5	0	3.00	0	0	2	3	1	5	0	3.82	0	0	3	0	1	5	0	4.09
15. Attitudes of spouse & children during school	0	0	0	1	2	6	0	4.56	0	1	0	1	6	3	0	3.91	1	1	2	1	2	4	0	3.27
16. Estimation of marketable skills prior to return	0	0	1	6	2	0	0	3.11	0	0	2	3	3	3	0	3.64	0	1	2	2	4	2	0	3.36
17. Current estimation of marketable skills	0	0	0	2	5	2	0	4.00	0	0	0	0	3	8	0	4.73	0	0	2	1	3	5	0	4.00
18. Return raised expectations for better position	0	0	1	1	4	3	0	4.00	0	0	1	2	5	3	0	3.91	0	0	0	3	3	5	0	4.18

[a]See narrative for discussion of Item 11.

22.2

TABLE 3(continued)

Items	GED 0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG	ACC 0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG	UAA 0	1	2	3	4	5	NR	AVG
19. Desire for further education	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	3.67	0	0	0	2	6	2	1	4.00	0	0	0	2	5	4	0	4.18
20. Return changed life	0	0	0	2	5	1	1	3.88	0	0	0	3	6	2	0	3.91	0	0	0	4	4	3	0	3.91

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that a return to school for the woman who has been away indeed precipitates changes in her self-perception and in the perception of her by those with whom she is intimate.

These observations correlate with those of Cokin (1982) and Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) who concluded that return to the classroom generates exploration, growth, and change. Individuation within relationships sparks conflicts, pressures, and commitments to a new lifestyle.

Gain in self-esteem rated as the highest overall change perceived by the subjects in this research. Reed's (1983) assessment that educational success is the biggest factor in raising self-image seems to be substantiated.

According to Reed, achievement in the classroom leads to greater self-confidence and promotes considerations of higher education. The present study verified that hypothesis when the majority of subjects rated their desire for continued education as "high."

Possession of marketable skills has been viewed as important to the re-emerging woman by several researchers (Mendelsohn, 1980; Sackett, 1983; and Barlow-Burgess & Kaufman, 1983). Women, who after some time away from the workplace, seem to "bloom" when they realize that some or all of the skills they possess are marketable (Barlow-Burgess & Kaufman, 1983).

The women in this study were not different. Each of the three groups rated an increase in estimation of marketable skills following return to school.

The majority of the respondents also felt that their return to the classroom

had a significant impact on their lives. This is consistent with previous research (Mendelsohn, 1980).

It can be concluded that the re-emerging woman is a major component in the United States student population of higher education. Her presence in the academic environment has and will continue to foster an awareness of administrators and instructors to a new breed of student.

Because of the unique characteristics, needs, and aspirations of the returning woman, new approaches to her education may be warranted. It may behoove traditional educators to reassess and heed the challenge posed by Douvan (1970) to look closely at where women have come from and where women currently are. To see the reality of this challenge, one needs only to consider the poignant comments of a participant in this study:

> Prior to completing school, I felt that I had no "right" to express my opinions because I hadn't even finished high school, even though not finishing wasn't related to academic achievement but due to parental illness.

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APPENDIX

Dear Participant,

This survey is being conducted as part of a research study on women who have returned to school after some time away. This information will assist me in preparing a presentation on attitudinal and social changes in "re-emerging" women. The research is in conjunction with my work toward a Master of Education degree in guidance and counseling at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

Strict confidentiality is assured. I ask you to make no identifying marks on the form. Please do not sign the survey when you have completed it.

After you have answered the questions and entered any desired comments, remove this cover letter and put the form into the envelope provided.

I thank you for your cooperation in this project. If you wish to learn the compiled results, you may call me at (907) 279-3246 or write to me at: 1712 Morningtide Court, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.

Sincerely,

Margaret Weilert

Margaret Weilert

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ANSWER WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RESPONSE.

1. Please estimate your own level of self-esteem prior to returning to school on the following scale.

low	fair	average	good	very high
1	2	3	4	5

2. Please estimate your current level of self-esteem on the same scale.

low	fair	average	good	very high
1	2	3	4	5

3. To what degree would you estimate that school has effected this change?

not applicable	not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	a good deal
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. Please indicate how you believed your spouse/partner thought of you before you returned to school.

not applicable	subordinate	incapable	capable	equal	superior
0	1	2	3	4	5

5. Please indicate how you believe your spouse/partner currently thinks of you on the same scale.

not applicable	subordinate	incapable	capable	equal	superior
0	1	2	3	4	5

6. To what degree would you estimate that school has effected this change in your spouse's/partner's perception of you?

not applicable	not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	a good deal
0	1	2	3	4	5

7. Please estimate how your return to and completion of school changed your relationship with your spouse/partner.

not applicable	changed for the worse	remained unchanged	changed with mixed resul
0	1	2	3

changed for the better	greatly improved
4	5

8. Please indicate how you believed your children thought of you prior to your return to school.

not applicable	dumb	"out of it"	OK	pretty neat	top notch
0	1	2	3	4	5

9. Please indicate how you believe your children currently think of you on the same scale.

not applicable	dumb	"out of it"	OK	pretty neat	top notch
0	1	2	3	4	5

10. To what degree would you estimate that school has effected this change?

not applicable	not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	a good deal
0	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please indicate which of the following <u>most</u> influenced your return to school.

necessity	parents/family	spouse/partner	friends	personal desire
1	2	3	4	5

12. Please indicate which of the following most accurately describes your feelings on your first day of return to school.

terrified	very uneasy	doubtful	fairly comfortable	very comfortable
1	2	3	4	5

13. Please rate your instructors on the following scale.

negative	indifferent	encouraging	helpful	supportive
1	2	3	4	5

14. Please rate your associations with your classmates on the same scale.

negative	indifferent	encouraging	helpful	supportive
1	2	3	4	5

15. Please indicate how you felt your spouse/partner and/or your children to be while you were in school.

not applicable	interferring	indifferent	moderately accepting	accepting	accepting & supportive
0	1	2	3	4	5

16. Please estimate your possession of marketable skills before returning to school.

unknown to me	few	undeveloped	average	many
1	2	3	4	5

17. Please estimate your current possession of marketable skills on the same scale.

unknown to me	few	undeveloped	average	many
1	2	3	4	5

18. Please indicate how being in school raised your expectations for a better job/position.

not at all	very little	moderately	considerably	greatly
1	2	3	4	5

19. Since completion of your particular course of study, please indicate your desire for further education.

not at all	low	moderate	high	high--but in the future
1	2	3	4	5

20. Please indicate how your return to school, viewed overall, changed your life.

not at all	very little	somewhat	significantly	tremendously
1	2	3	4	5

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The preceding areas were of interest to the researcher. Please comment below on any areas that were important to you but have not been sufficiently covered in this survey. Please do not sign your name.